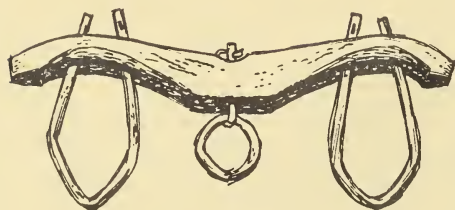


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LINCOLN BIBLIOGRAPHY— ITS PRESENT STATUS AND NEEDS

By ERNEST J. WESSEN

WHAT is, and what is not *Lincolniana*? For over thirty years the Lincoln experts have been splitting hairs on the question of what should be included, or excluded, from a Lincoln bibliography. In the meantime we remain without an authoritative work on this, one of the most voluminous and important branches of Americana.

No one knows how many books have been written relating to Abraham Lincoln. One *Lincolnian* placed the number at five thousand; while another specialist thought nine thousand might be a more accurate figure. Alas! both possess widely divergent views as to what falls within that term "*Lincolniana*." The important fact is that the task of preparing a bibliography of those books is a gigantic and complex one, and the passage of the years but adds to the difficulties.

Our historians may turn to quite complete compilations of Lincoln's speeches and letters. Fairly authentic lists of medals, photographs and prints are available. Lincoln's day-by-day movements have been recorded in that superb work, *Lincoln 1854-1861*, by Paul M. Angle, and the subsequent volumes issued by The Abraham Lincoln Association. In addition to providing a current Lincoln bibliography, occasional numbers of the weekly broadside, *Lincoln Lore*, edited by Louis A. Warren, provide valuable though fragmentary studies of *Lincolniana*; for instance: a list of the various editions of the so-called *Lincoln*—

Douglas Debates, Columbus, 1860; the various issues of the *New York Herald* for April 15, 1865—that Ulster County Gazette of Lincolniana; and even a list of the variant issues of Lincoln pennies. All these and more we have; yet we have no comprehensive bibliography.

Strangely enough no bibliographical project ever enjoyed a more auspicious start. William V. Spencer, of Boston, must have commenced work on his *Lincolniana, In Memoriam*, almost before the ink was dry on the many orations and sermons listed by him. If the work itself was no great contribution to bibliography, it was of value in that it probably served to stimulate the interest of an eighteen-year-old boy, one Charles Henry Hart. Young as he was, Hart at this time was serving as Corresponding Secretary of the Numismatic and Antiquarian Society of Philadelphia. Before the close of the year 1865 he was painstakingly gathering the material for his *Sermons, Orations and Addresses occasioned by the Death of Abraham Lincoln*.

Young Hart's procedure was characteristic of the man who would later gain world-wide recognition as an outstanding art authority. He sought for and wrote the authors of the works which were to be included in his list. In a footnote to the introduction to his work we are told that he wrote over twelve hundred such letters, and received eight hundred and fifty in reply. Among his correspondents was William H. Herndon—Lincoln's law partner. In his correspondence with Herndon we find a splendid illustration of his method.¹ On June 29, 1866, Herndon wrote Hart as follows:

Let me suggest one lecture. The title reads thus—*The Life and Character of Abraham Lincoln—A Lecture by Hon. Mark W. Delahay of Leavenworth, Kansas*. Mr. Delahay is Judge of the District Court of Kansas—a U. S. Court. I hold the lecture in my hand and copy the title.

Here was information sufficient to satisfy a less thorough worker,

¹ Emanuel Hertz, *The Hidden Lincoln* (New York, 1938).

but not young Hart. It was not until two years later that he received a letter from Delahay, telling of his friendship with Lincoln, and providing an account of how he came to have the work printed.² Let me say, parenthetically, that it will be most illuminating to follow the vicissitudes of this particular entry at the hands of the next Lincoln bibliographer.

Hart was not content with supplying the bare transcription of the title-pages of his entries, and such meager information as was required by the bibliographical standards of that day. Not only did he include many notes similar to Delahay's, but he acquired authentic information as to the number of issues of each work, and the number of copies published; a valuable and perhaps unique feature of his work.

Hart had arranged that his bibliography appear as a supplement to a life of Lincoln which Herndon planned to publish in the late sixties. However, the publication of Herndon's work was to hang fire for twenty years. In 1870, Hart, tired of waiting, joined forces with Andrew Boyd, the Albany, New York, publisher of city directories, and an enthusiastic Lincoln collector. In that year Boyd published their joint effort under the title: *A Memorial Lincoln Bibliography: Being an Account of Books, Eulogies, Sermons, Portraits, Engravings, Medals, etc., Published upon Abraham Lincoln . . . Comprising a Collection in the Possession of the Compiler, Andrew Boyd.*

Hart's work occupies the first half of this book, and remains to this day the best source for bibliographical information on the eulogies, funeral orations and sermons.

No doubt the book would today rate only as a bibliographical curiosity, but for Hart's heavy contribution. However, Boyd's share must not be underestimated. He lists a great many very rare items of Lincolniana. He accounts for a number of important broadsides which are recorded in no other work that I know of. Although, due to poor arrangement, they are most elusive,

² Andrew Boyd, *A Memorial Lincoln Bibliography* (Albany, N. Y., 1870), p. 42.

Boyd's notes are valuable. He succeeded in determining the priority of the editions of several books.

There are those who have said that this book was the genesis of Lincoln bibliography. As will be seen, it was substantially more than that. Omitting many of the valuable notes provided by Hart, reversing Boyd's correct decisions as to the priority of the editions of some books, overlooking a number of important entries, Daniel Fish, whose work is currently accepted, found, between the covers of this book, eighty per cent of the entries which went into the first edition of his *Lincoln Bibliography*.

In passing it should be pointed out that the work of Boyd and Hart was truly a labor of love. Well printed by Joel Munsell, finely bound in three-quarters morocco, the book was published in a trade edition large enough to meet the immediate demand. Although according to Boyd's prospectus the actual production cost of the book was \$4.25 per copy, it was sold at \$5.00 (with the exception of ten copies on large paper which were priced at \$10.00).

It was unfortunate that Hart's interest in Lincolniana did not extend beyond the funeral orations, sermons and eulogies. This young lawyer, whose word on matters pertaining to historical portraiture would soon be accepted as decisive on both sides of the Atlantic, was qualified to produce a model bibliography. He could have received but scant encouragement from the Lincolnians of his day, for it is doubtful if they felt a real need for a bibliography such as he would have produced.

For the early Lincoln collector was not one who confined his activities to books alone. On the contrary he was possessed of a flaming sentimental urge to own every conceivable object which would serve as a souvenir of his beloved Lincoln. In his eyes that relic most closely associated with the martyred President was the most valuable item in his collection. In the preface to his bibliography, Andrew Boyd boasted that he owned the largest Lincoln collection extant. We know that he owned a superb collection of

autograph material, as well as an impressive array of books, pamphlets and broadsides, not to mention his prints and original photographs. In addition to all of this, he catalogues with apparent pride a piece of the wallpaper from the theatre box in which Lincoln was shot, a bit of cloth which had been used to stop the flow of blood, and a couple of choice feathers from the pillow upon which he died. This penchant for grisly relics seems to have been general.

Had Major William H. Lambert never turned to *Lincolni-ana*, his name would have endured among bookmen as the man who had brought together one of the most important Thackeray collections. But Lambert was also interested in Lincoln, and assembled one of the greatest collections ever owned by a private individual. Yet even this dyed-in-the-wool bookman yielded to the lure of Lincoln relics. He owned a piece of fence-rail said to have been cut by the Great Rail-splitter, and a bit of brick from the Springfield home. These were but trifles. Alongside these bits of bric-a-brac were to be found a cuff-button worn by Lincoln at the time he was shot, a matted lock of hair removed from his head after he had been shot, and a piece of silver fringe from the hearse.

So long as this interest in gruesome tid-bits predominated, there was not likely to exist any great demand for a Lincoln bibliography. Hence we are not surprised to learn that the next person to submit a contribution to Lincoln bibliography failed to find a publisher. I am informed that the New York State Library has the original, unpublished manuscript of Mary Louisa Sutliff's *Bibliography of Poems relating to Abraham Lincoln*, which was completed in 1893. I know nothing of the scope or merit of the work, and mention it here only as a matter of record.

In 1893 many new collectors had entered the field, and these now sought to acquire as many books as possible relating to Lincoln. If the vogue for relics had diminished because of the scarcity of authentic material, the sentimental urge remained.

These new collectors cared not a whit about edition, asking only that the book or pamphlet be a legitimate item of Lincolniana. But what was Lincolniana? Hundreds if not thousands of titles were available. Many of these were indubitably Lincolniana; others related to Lincoln in part only; while others pertained to the events in which he had participated. Each collector had his own ideas, drew his lines accordingly, and no two were in complete agreement.

Such was the chaotic condition in the field when Daniel Fish, of Minneapolis, began assembling what he referred to as "a respectable collection of Lincoln literature." This seems to have been around the year 1895. As a collector Fish made rapid progress. By the year 1900 he had become one of the country's leading collectors of Lincolniana. It was in that year that he provided the answer to the Lincoln collector's prayer, by publishing his *Lincoln Literature a Bibliographical Account of Books and Pamphlets relating to Abraham Lincoln*.

This work was issued in a limited edition of one hundred and sixty copies to sell at three dollars and a half. Herein was included only such books and pamphlets as "pertained wholly or chiefly to the man [Lincoln]; his character and services, his life and death." Broadsides were rejected on the grounds that they "shed no appreciable light upon the person to whom they refer, nor do they disclose the opinions of any known individual concerning him."

Whatever fault may be found with the book, it served one purpose: Fish had fenced-in what he considered a "respectable collection of Lincoln literature." Here was the collecting-pattern which many collectors had been seeking, and many more would follow to the letter in the years to come. Almost overnight Fish found himself the accepted arbiter of what did and did not constitute Lincolniana. Frequently he referred to the contents of this book, and its ensuing edition, as "the standard collection."

In February, 1910, he said:³ "I try to define the limits of legitimate Lincolniana in the one class of books and brochures, while they [collectors] 'cuss' because I omit some doubtful item for which they have been induced to exchange good money."

And he did not exaggerate. If it was not in "Fish" it was worthless. To this day there are Lincoln collectors—those who should know better—who slavishly follow the last edition of Fish, collecting only what they refer to as "Fish items." Of vastly more importance, there are some librarians, and not a few eminent Lincolnians, who feel that all that is required is to bring Fish down to date. On the other hand there are leading collectors and librarians who have found the work to be unreliable and of little practical use.

Now the opinion of the Lincolnians is something to be reckoned with. It was recently estimated that there were two thousand active Lincoln collectors in this country. I think five hundred would be more accurate. *The American Library Directory*⁴ lists nineteen libraries with special Lincoln collections. Among these specialists—and naturally in outside circles—Fish has become so firmly entrenched that he may be dislodged only by a thorough examination of his work.

Fish's approach to the preparation of his bibliography was that of the private collector, one seeking to lay down the limits of his own collecting activities. The first edition bears evidence that it was originally compiled as a combination catalogue of his own collection, and a want-list of the books which he sought. Opposite half of the entries appears an asterisk, the explanation of which at the foot of page one reads:

Titles followed by the asterisk are not in the compiler's collection. Persons owning such, and willing to part with them, will kindly communicate the fact.

As a checklist it was a perfectly legitimate piece of work. When

³ *Proceedings of the Second and Third Annual Meetings of the Lincoln Fellowship* (New York, 1909-1910), p. 37.

⁴ *The American Library Directory* (New York, 1935).

Fish permitted it to be published as *A Bibliographical Account of Books and Pamphlets Relating to Abraham Lincoln*, he was going too far.

Hardly a page of the book was tarnished by the taint of original research. As previously pointed out eighty per cent of the entries were lifted from Boyd's bibliography, with Hart's consent. The small balance was made up of a sadly incomplete list of the books which had been published subsequent to Boyd, together with a few rarities the titles of which were supplied by Major Lambert. He made not the slightest effort to survey the great mass of available literature, and determine which titles—according to his own test—should be admitted, and which should be rejected.

In the absence of a more complete and satisfactory work, it naturally follows that Fish has proven of value as a subject bibliography. But those who view the work from that angle alone will find ample evidence that it was not compiled for that purpose. "A bibliographical account," he called it. It is a bibliographical account in which was shown an almost complete disregard for variant issues, and something akin to contempt for first editions. Repeatedly he provides us with the description of a late edition, and supplies a footnote mentioning the existence of one or more earlier editions. Time and again he transcribes title-pages which contain thereon information to the effect that thousands of copies had been previously issued. Considered as but a collector's checklist it is a shoddy makeshift.

Fish's slovenly work is not to be excused on the ground that the rank and file of his fellow Lincoln collectors were not interested in acquiring first editions. If the work is to be correctly appraised it must be judged in the light of normal bibliographical standards. It is with this thought in mind that I offer a few examples of Fish's technique, taken of course from the first edition of his work.

I have mentioned that Fish placed an asterisk opposite each title in his bibliography which was not in his own collection. This

enables us to learn something of his procedure. Invariably he chose to enter the description of the book on his own shelves regardless of how late an edition it might be, and this even though an equally complete description of the first edition was available.

On page 126 appears Townsend's *The Life, Crime and Capture of John Wilkes Booth*. For this entry he has chosen the eighty-page edition—which was in his own collection—and a footnote reads: "An earlier edition, pp 64, and another pp 65." Yet before him lay Boyd's *Bibliography*, and therein was to be found an equally complete description of the first—sixty-five page—edition, as well as a note detailing the difference between this and the later edition entered by Fish.

He lists, on page 30, Browne's *The Everyday Life of Abraham Lincoln*, New York, 1887, which is also indicated as being in his collection. Again we have one of his notes, this time reading: "An earlier edition of 1886 bears imprint of Park Publishing Company."

Both of the above titles are quite scarce. But Fish accords similar treatment to one of the most common Lincoln titles. He describes an edition separated from the first by a span of nearly twenty years: on page 34 we find Carpenter's *The Inner Life of Abraham Lincoln. Six Months in the White House*. Twenty-seventh thousand, Boston, 1883. Below this we have the illuminating note: "First published in 1866, by Hurd and Houghton as 'Six Months in the White House with Abraham Lincoln.'"

I am completely at a loss to account for his somewhat erratic treatment of the bibliographical notes supplied by Boyd and Hart. Turning to page 26, under Boston, we find *A Memorial of Abraham Lincoln, Late President of the United States*. Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1865. A quarto of one hundred and fifty-three pages. This time he follows Hart's notes in part, and provides a list of the bastard titles, but completely ignores that section of Hart's notes, reading:

Of the above, 900 copies were printed in octavo, 150 in royal octavo, 100 in quarto and bound in full morocco, and 200 in quarto with the imprint of Ticknor & Fields.

Fish condenses this information to read: "The bulk of the edition issued in 8vo without publisher's imprint." There is not a word of that great rarity, the morocco-bound quarto without the publisher's imprint, or of the different octavos.

Coggeshall's *Lincoln Memorial*, Columbus, 1865, is listed on page 37. Here he describes only the very well-known edition, to be found in most important Lincoln collections. On page 96 of his *Bibliography* Boyd provides a most interesting note:

The same bound in paper cover, on the front of which is the title and on the inside a poem of 34 lines: on the back cover is printed an account of a meeting held in the City Hall in Columbus, Ohio, April 25th, 1865, in regard to a statue to Mr. Lincoln and a monument to deceased Ohio soldiers; the inside page is filled with an appeal to the Ohio people in behalf of the object.

All of this made no impression upon Mr. Fish. This edition is very rare. Recently, when a copy passed through my hands, it was found that the material printed upon the wrappers was substantially important, and that the issue in wrappers stands on its own feet as a separate bibliographical entity.

Some time ago, while studying the Lincoln biographies issued during the campaign of 1860, I found that some of them had undergone considerable revision at the hands of an unknown censor. Later, while studying the biographical material issued during the 1864 campaign, I found before me two variants of *Old Abe's Jokes. Fresh from Abraham's Bosom*, both issued in New York by T. R. Dawley, undated but obviously issued in 1864. One of these copies contained a chapter headed "Mrs. Old Abe." The material in that chapter, if not downright derogatory, was far from flattering to the lady. In the second copy that material had been omitted. Here, I thought, was evidence of the activities of an 1864 campaign censor. Fish lists the book on page 85, and

the footnote reads: "Same issued under another title, and with a slight variation as to contents."

Months passed before I had access to a copy of Boyd's *Bibliography*, and then my theory was exploded. Boyd's note reads in part: "Same as above, except that the last article: 'Mrs. Old Abe, from the New York Mercury.' is omitted in this edition. . . . Published after Mr. Lincoln's death." Again we find a worthless note substituted for valuable bibliographical data.

Fish demonstrates a surprising lack of knowledge of the books published in his own day. Robert G. Ingersoll was very much alive at this time, and on page 66 he lists Ingersoll's *Abraham Lincoln, A Lecture*, New York, 1895. Had he been sufficiently interested to inquire of Mr. Ingersoll, he would have learned that the book first appeared in England, in 1893. He had drawn no lesson from the splendid results achieved by Hart under similar circumstances.

He lists only the dated edition of Herndon's *Lincoln, the Story of a Great Life*, Chicago, 1890. (In the later edition of his bibliography he mentioned an undated edition, in a footnote.) At this time he seems to have been in complete ignorance of the existence of an undated edition. Had he inquired of those who participated in the publication of this book he would have had it in his power to solve a problem that has been bothering bookmen for fifty years. Although the evidence that the undated edition was the first is overwhelming, there are many who, because of Fish's citation, believe the dated edition to be the first, and the question remains a moot one.

It is of interest to note at this point that many share the belief that the first edition was suppressed. But no one seems to have thought of comparing the texts, and thus determining which was the earlier. I own a copy of the prospectus, once the property of Vincent Starrett. Therein that famous bookman has inscribed a note, reading in part as follows: "It contains all but a page of the first chapter, including all the passages suppressed in later edi-

tions." The text in the prospectus, as well as in the first and second editions, is identical.

Lest some may think that I have chosen the first edition of Fish's work as being especially vulnerable, let me say that all of these faults, and many more, are to be found in the subsequent edition of the work. Indeed, if there was any serious effort to improve the work, between editions, I have been unable to find a trace of it.

In the year 1903 the Library of Congress published George Thomas Ritchie's *A List of Lincolniana in the Library of Congress*. This work was revised and re-issued in 1906. During the same year there was published a work which added nothing to the subject: William H. Smith, Jr.'s *A Priced Lincoln Bibliography*. In the meantime with the aid of Major Lambert, Ritchie and Judd Stewart, Fish added three hundred titles to his list, and published it in an edition limited to seventy-five copies. It was also issued as a volume of the Tandy edition of Nicolay and Hay's *Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln*.

Except for a new arrangement there was no general revision of the work. The items were now listed in an alphabetical arrangement, and numbered. From now on I shall use those numbers. Such editing as one is able to discern is puzzling. Previously I mentioned Delahay's *Life and Character of Abraham Lincoln*, Leavenworth, Kansas. It was listed by Boyd, and on page 43 of Fish's first edition, but for unknown reasons it was dropped from this edition. A great rarity, it probably would have been forgotten but for the keen eyes of the workers on the *American Imprints Inventory*, who recently picked it up and recorded it as number 1594 in the *Check List of Kansas Imprints, 1854-1876*. As I have said, he now recognized the existence of the undated Herndon in a footnote to his number 409, but whether it was the first edition bothered him not at all.

In his preface he wrote: "Mr. Ritchie, also, through his excellent *List of Lincolniana in the Library of Congress* and by valued per-

sonal assistance, has placed me under deep obligation." Yet Fish's number 517, *Life of Abraham Lincoln*, London, 1865, is followed by this—for Fish—unusual note: "Title not verified; no copy found." However, on page 41 Ritchie⁵ lists a copy of the work as being present in the Library of Congress.

In the new edition Fish supplies us with occasional original notes, which are quite in keeping with the general quality of the work. Number 11 covers *Abraham Lincoln, in the latest Biography*, a pamphlet described by Fish as: "A review with Confederate leanings, of the Nicolay and Hay biography." He must have drawn that conclusion from the title; certainly it was not the result of his having read the text. It is, in fact, a scholarly and surprisingly dispassionate appraisal of Abraham Lincoln, written by a Southerner, or from the Southern viewpoint, in the light of facts disclosed by the then new Nicolay and Hay biography.

Under 75, Bartlett's *The Life and Public Services of Hon. Abraham Lincoln*, New York, 1860, appears this note: "Another edition, with same title-page as the above, except that the words 'Authorized Edition' are omitted, has a short preface, and the first chapter or 'part' is wholly different." If he had but taken the trouble really to compare the texts, not only would he have found irrefutable evidence that this edition with the dated preface was the first, but he would also have discovered that the revisions hinted at an interesting example of campaign censorship.

The most confusing feature of the entire work is his arrangement of the different editions of a given title. More often than not the first edition is barely noted, and no indication that it is the first is provided, thus leaving to the reader the natural assumption that the edition described in full is the first. When he came to the famous *Cooper Union Speech* he accorded each edition the dignity of a separate citation. The 1860 editions are numbered from 528 to 533 inclusive. At the top of the list—number 528—is the well-known edition with the notes by Nott and

⁵ 1903 edition.

Brainerd. It heads Fish's list, and as a result is generally considered the first edition. It was, I feel certain, the last edition issued in the year 1860. It was published very late in the campaign, its preface being dated September, while for months prior the metropolitan dailies had been advertising the other edition as on sale.

By no means have I exhausted this phase of the discussion. A complete catalogue of the deficiencies and errors in Fish's bibliography would be a long one indeed. I have provided a fair sampling; no useful purpose can be served by going into further detail. The whole affair was a sorry performance for a man who could boast: "Whenever there is a puzzling question of Lincoln Bibliography to settle, I am the 'George' who is permitted to 'do it.'"

We have noted that in the compilation of the first edition it was Fish's simple purpose to catalogue "a respectable collection of Lincoln literature." In that list were approximately eight hundred titles. Over five years had now elapsed, and in the new—and for our purpose final—edition there are eleven hundred and three entries. One hundred and twenty-five of the new titles listed had been published since the appearance of the first edition. Of the remaining one hundred and seventy-five new entries Fish says—in the preface to the last edition—one hundred were drawn from their hiding places by the circulation of the first edition.

In these five years Mr. Fish was very busy, as will be seen in that preface: "The chief libraries of both Europe and America have been visited, extensive correspondence has been carried on, and scores of catalogs examined." Again, "The merely political writings of the period have been sifted"—a man-sized job in itself. As the result of this tremendous effort, he produces just seventy-five new entries. And of these Mr. Ritchie's list contributed no small part.

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Fish's test for admission now became an involved, complex formula, in which his personal judgment was the controlling factor. Broad­sides were rejected for the reason previously given—"they shed no light on the life that evoked them." "Books and pamphlets devoted in part to Lincoln, but treating also of other subjects, are not within the plan; though a few, wherein the former matter largely predominates, are retained." The contemporary political writings had been sifted by him, he wrote, "with a view to retaining such books and pamphlets as may be fairly said to owe their origin to the man." And so on, for two and one-half pages. Overlooking a great many omissions of common items which met his own test, and conceding that he made an honest effort, the list after all represents but one man's views as to the scope of a Lincoln collection. Fish testified that this was not his idea of a comprehensive Lincoln bibliography.

"Obviously enough," he wrote, "much of the matter thus listed is of but trifling value. Plainly, too, the student of Lincoln must resort to wider sources in the effort to learn what manner of man he was." It has been my observation that a good student first seeks a bibliography of his subject. Today's Lincoln student would of necessity be referred to Fish, for that work with all of its faults, is the current Lincoln bibliography.

There have been subsequent contributions, which, I suppose, should be mentioned. Chief among these is Joseph B. Oakleaf's *Lincoln Bibliography; a List of Books and Pamphlets relating to Abraham Lincoln*, Cedar Rapids, 1925. This work, brought out at a prohibitive price, and of which but ninety-five copies were offered for sale, was intended as a continuation of Fish. Nearly sixteen hundred items are listed. We need not consider it in detail, for it is notoriously inaccurate, and subject to much of the criticism directed towards the work which its author sought to supplement. The little known *Lincoln Bibliography*, by John W. Starr, is a bibliographical curiosity of no merit.

In *Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society*, 1929, appears "A Bibliography of Biographies of Abraham Lincoln," by William E. Barton. The greater part of the list consists of entries drawn from Fish. However, in an effort to determine the priority of the campaign lives of 1860, Mr. Barton searched newspaper files, and copyright records. Alas! Like Fish he failed to examine the texts of the books which he was studying, and those texts contained many of the clues that he was seeking. In 1937 I prepared "Campaign Lives of Abraham Lincoln, 1860," which appeared in *Papers in Illinois History and Transactions for the Year 1937*, Illinois State Historical Society, 1938.

For some years past The Lincoln National Life Foundation has tried to keep abreast of the flood of contemporary Lincoln literature, issuing bibliographical lists from time to time in its weekly broadside, *Lincoln Lore*. So far as I know, this is the story of Lincoln bibliography down to date.

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Thirty-two years ago Daniel Fish appeared before this Society and presented a paper entitled *Lincoln Collections and Lincoln Bibliography*. He closed with the following plea:

A chief problem of Lincoln Bibliography is the problem of inclusion and exclusion. . . . The necessity is upon us to discover, if possible, some rule of selection. I do not profess to have made any such discovery, and if this learned Society can suggest a sound governing principle, one which will point the way infallibly through a jungle of perplexities, its existence will be justified beyond all cavil.⁶

Had Fish turned back to Hart's bibliography he would have found at least a hint to the answer in the introduction to that work: "Is it nothing," asked Hart, "to have preserved for future ages a record of these products of the press called forth by one of the greatest epochs in the nation's life; to erect a library within

⁶ Bibliographical Society of America, *Proceedings and Papers* (New York, 1909), vol. III.

one cover for the true historian, the one of fifty or one hundred years hence, to make choice of the foundation whereon to build his more lasting monument . . . ?” Let us give that historian, of a hundred years hence, a bibliography as comprehensive as we are now able to provide. Let us approach the problem with the knowledge that we are completely unaware of his probable requirements. Do this and we shall have a comprehensive bibliography. And there, Mr. Fish, is your answer—though it be a bit tardy.

I can think of no good reason why the scope of our bibliography should be limited by the width of collectors’ bookshelves. Let them set up their own limits, and in the authentic Lincoln bibliography they will find the information which they need regardless of the trend which their collecting activities have taken. As a matter of fact the very vastness of the field is now forcing discerning collectors to specialize. I know of one collecting only the campaign material; yet another seeks everything pertaining to the assassination; still another wants material pertaining to Lincoln’s birth and childhood. It is a healthy trend, which will gain momentum as hundreds of new volumes pour into the hopper year after year. Only a thoroughly comprehensive work will be of service to the Lincoln collector of tomorrow.

I am aware of the objection which the Lincolnians will raise. It is conservatively expressed by Paul M. Angle, who wrote:

“Lincolniana” is generally understood to include only those works which have the name of Lincoln prominent in their titles, or which deal in major part with Abraham Lincoln, or some member of his immediate family. Strict adherence to this interpretation involves one in inconsistencies, but departure from it opens up the entire field of Civil War Literature.⁷

Mr. Angle would be among the first to agree that no living specialist is qualified to prescribe the diet of source material for that historian of a hundred years hence. No one would seriously

⁷ Abraham Lincoln Association, *Bulletin* (Springfield, Illinois, June, 1936).

contend that all Civil War literature should be included in a Lincoln bibliography. It is said that Shakespeare drank beer; yet I do not conceive that a catalogue of books relating to the brewing industry of his day should be included in a Shakespeare bibliography. In the Civil War Lincoln played the leading role; yet that does not make *The History of the 109th Pennsylvania Volunteers* an item of Lincolniana. But because of his close association with that epoch, its literature must be carefully explored. The man who views bibliographical research as an onerous chore is doomed to failure; the true bibliographer will welcome the opportunity to explore such a promising mine of source material. Fortunately we are able to sample it:

Out of eight hundred and ninety-nine entries in Daniel J. Ryan's bibliography, *The Civil War Literature of Ohio*, Cleveland, 1911, forty-nine relate to Abraham Lincoln. Ryan does not seem to have feared invading the vast Lincoln field, and as a result we find in his work twenty-five items of well-known Lincolniana which were recorded by Fish. Of the remaining twenty we find one to be an unrecorded eulogy of Lincoln by Rutherford B. Hayes, a speech delivered before the Loyal Legion at Philadelphia in 1890. In Ryan 512, an account of the annual dinner of the Ohio Commandery of the Loyal Legion, appears a valuable contribution by General Jacob D. Cox: *Lincoln at Antietam*. In Ryan 513, a thirty-nine page pamphlet covering the dinner of the same organization for the following year, 1895, will be found the address of the famous Judge Advocate, John A. Bingham, entitled, *Personal Recollections of Abraham Lincoln*. Ryan 522 is a report of the after-dinner speeches—the same organization—for the year 1904, and includes, says Ryan, “a valuable reminiscential paper on *Lincoln and Douglas*, by Honorable Clark E. Carr, who knew both characters.” Is there anyone who will deny that these are valuable nuggets of Lincolniana? But this brings us down to the well-known “bulk test,” of which I will

have something to say later. In Ryan 129 will be found Judge Albert C. Thompson's *Personal Recollections of Abraham Lincoln*; while 261 is a volume entitled, *G. A. R. Papers. Papers Read before Fred C. Jones Post*, included in which is Lieutenant Asa B. Isham's *Personal Reminiscences of the Assassination of Abraham Lincoln*. I have not exhausted Ryan, but surely here is evidence sufficient to prove that the "entire field of Civil War literature" must be opened up.

Not so valid is Fish's objection to the inclusion of what he calls "merely political writings of the period." "Most of them," he says, "would have appeared in similar form had another than Lincoln been President." A fantastic supposition, and for such we find no room in a discussion of bibliography. The fact is that in the campaigns of 1860 and 1864 Lincoln was the central figure. Every document directly supporting his candidacy and every pamphlet in direct opposition thereto is beyond all cavil pure Lincolniana. And this, of course, applies to his earlier campaigns in Illinois, about which strangely enough there seems to be little question.

Products of his own pen, his Presidential messages and Executive orders—all must be admitted; yet most of them have been denied admittance in the past. And, of course, writings directed against his administrative acts or in support of them are legitimate entries in Lincoln bibliography.

The literature of the Confederacy must be examined. As a hint of what may be found there I have in mind that colorful speech of Judah P. Benjamin, in which he analyzed the Lincoln-Douglas debates, and found Lincoln the more sincere of the two contenders. A somewhat similar thing was the speech of the fire-eating Governor of Georgia, who, at the white heat of the conflict, dared get up before a Georgia audience and favorably compare Lincoln with Jeff Davis. There recently passed into the William Wyles Lincoln Library, at Santa Barbara College, California, Jeff Davis' *Presidential Message* to the Congress of the Confederacy, in which he gives an account of the abortive peace

meeting at Fortress Monroe at which Lincoln was present. This was unknown, I believe, until it came into my hands.

Collateral literature must be surveyed by one competent to distinguish between worthless, repetitive or hearsay evidence, and admissible evidence disclosing new light on the subject. Important corroborative material on obscure points must be recognized and recorded; and so, too, should be recorded valuable interpretative views of the subject by competent persons. I have no inclination to split hairs here; I do not intend to suggest that all literature of the period should be examined, but the most obvious and likely sources should be. And this brings us down to what I have chosen to call the "bulk test."

You will recall that Fish put it in these words: "Prints devoted in part to Lincoln but treating also of other topics are not within the plan." And that Mr. Angle put it this way: "'Lincolniana' is generally understood to include only those works . . . which deal in major part with Abraham Lincoln." All will agree that a single page of some books will shed more light on Lincoln than a shelf full of some of the trash that has been written about him. I have only to submit that the test should be directed towards the quality and character rather than to quantity.

A large number of items of Lincolniana were published in extremely small editions, often for local consumption only. As a result many items are known to us only because single copies have been preserved. For over seventy-five years these have been in the process of distribution among collectors. I doubt that the combined catalogues of all of the institutional collections would disclose more than a relatively small number of them. Geographically they are spread thinly over the country. There are few private collections that do not boast one or more, and fewer still that boast over a dozen of them. These private collections must be canvassed if the bibliography is to be complete.

This brings to mind the necessity for a census of rarities. The bibliography without such a census is like a reference book with-

out an index. There is no use to compile a bibliography if the compiler does not locate one or more copies. Few care to know that a book exists if they cannot lay their hands on it.

The identification of first editions promises many absorbingly interesting problems for the Lincoln bibliographer. He will find himself in what is practically a virgin field, and working under somewhat unique conditions. Frequently he will find that several editions of an important item were issued during a period of but a few months.

Fish listed six different editions of the so-called *Cooper Union Speech* issued during the year 1860. Eighteen months ago a collector wrote asking my opinion as to which was the first edition. In an effort to provide an answer I located thirteen 1860 editions, and I am more than ever at sea for I have strong reason to believe that there was a New York edition earlier than any I have seen.

It will come as a shock to most of you to learn that the first edition of the immortal *Gettysburg Address* has not been definitely identified. In its earliest printed form it was appended to Everett's Oration, and thus published in several editions within the span of a few weeks. Fish assumed that the New York edition, dated and perhaps published late in 1863, was the first. However, it has long been known that one and perhaps two editions appeared in Boston in December, 1863, and the priority remains undetermined.

This is a matter of prime importance to the librarian and collector. The determination of the first editions of a large number of books is required, and the complex problems involved will require a great deal of research. It is a vital and essential part of a bibliography, and no one will be content with less than an authoritative treatment.

As to the final arrangement of the material I have nothing to offer. Modern bibliographical standards are too well known to justify discussion at this time.

The compilation of a comprehensive Lincoln bibliography is

probably the greatest single task confronting American bibliographers. Because of the intimate relation of Lincoln to our country it is far more worthy of attention than have been many of the subjects which have been treated in such distinguished contributions by American bibliographers. And so, if I have not already indicated that need, let me say that Lincoln bibliography needs most the services of competent bibliographers.

The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America



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